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Question1: As I said below, the real estate market is not helping the whole land pricing either as they are selling it at "fair market" value (which is pretty crazy considering it is farmland really, middle of nowhere). Attention needs to be given to this and farmland needs to remain farmland through subsidies, conservation efforts, and the like. Maybe the program benefits need rewriting such that they cannot be capitalized into land prices (some sort of exception maybe). At this point it would be impossible (not worth it from a business point of view) to try and purchase a parcel of land the size of our family farm as "fair market" value doesn't even make it possible. At this point, until farmland is classified as such and commands a much lower price (the land prices cannot be controlled at this time), and there will be very little incentive for anybody to enter the market as a "new" farmer. It just isn't feasible at this time given the circumstance. But that is just my opinion based upon my observations.

Question2: In order to be competitive in the "Global" markets, the US farmer must be able to overcome the low costs of labor that the overseas farmers currently enjoy. At this point, from a domestic point of view, the American farmer cannot be competitive and profitable as labor is still expensive regardless of how much mechanization you have (machines do cost a lot of money too). As such, I do not believe free trade works in the favor of the American farmer, and that like products imported to this country should be tariffed/taxed so as to give the American farmer a competitive chance of being considered. As for exports, focus should be given to products that can only be grown here, and/or those that have exceptional quality when compared to those of other possible exporters (w/regard to the country of importation). An aggressive educational program should be put forth for American farmers as to what foreign nations want and the regulations that may hinder sales there because the U.S. does not have as strict standards as other industrialized nations (as an example).

Question3: To be honest, farm subsidies is one answer, but probably not the only one. It is pretty hard to reduce production as that is what seems to count here in the states. There might need to be a shift in policy w/regard to quality of output. Maybe put forth food standards that do not allow certain practices to happen. An example would be the pig farmer that keeps his pigs in the barn (many pigs) and feeds them so much, but does not allow them to move, as to get the heaviest pig out the door as quickly as possible(i.e. more poundage equals more cash w/quick turnaround). While this does indeed give a lot of pig, it does not give a very high quality piece of meat to the end user. Same goes for chicken and turkey farms. I believe there should be base quality standards for meat. A population is only as good as what it eats in terms of health. This policy would govern how an animal must be raised (for instance, free range), give a much better product, and keep the prices up. As for grains, I am not sure if the same method would work for that. I do not have any suggestions at this time for grains/crops.

Question4: I like the idea of "green" farming. In general, I believe that we need to raise our standards here w/regard to environmental awareness. Too many people do not care about how their practices endanger ground water or the soil in general. Another thing that I have been noticing is that urban sprawl is chewing up some of the best farmland around. Sprawl needs to be controlled and cities need to learn to grow up and in instead of out (maybe research how European and Asian countries do this). I have heard of some farmers land being annexed by the city, then taxed right out of farming and roughly forced to sell their land for development. I think that this seems to be plausible, and that while I am sure the farmer makes good money from the sale of his land, the realtor, and city, make much more from this type of situation. This sets in place a "system" that promotes sprawl and the annexation/selling of surrounding farmland to get it done (which consequently ends a family's way of life). While this crosses the boundary into other legalities, there should be an effort to promote the conservation of good farmland (and consequently, the controlling of sprawl). In today's farming, there really isn't an excuse to at least make an effort to be environmentally aware and sound.

Question5: Investing and researching new technologies are a good thing as long as they provide tangible benefits that offset the costs of said technologies.

Question6: There should be alot of attention paid to the biofuels (specifically biodiesel) as I think this is a good idea and may be a nice offset for foreign oil dependancy. While not the total solution for the fuel issue, it is a very viable one. Organic and specialty crops are also a good idea. There should also be a focus of food quality as well, hormones, pesticides, and what not, as they can affect the overall taste of a product I believe. I believe we need to focus not on quantity but quality too. Research should be given to genticly resistant crops (w/regard to climate and disease). Also, more research needs to be done w/domestic honeybees as I understand that in the US many have been wiped out and we are receiving alot of our honey from overseas.